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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Gaza Disengagement
- [2](#). Saudi Arabia

Key stories in the media:

All major media reported that the settler leadership accepted a late-night IDF and police compromise on their mass anti-disengagement protest planned for today. The settlers agreed to hold a "short" rally in Sderot between 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. EDT and to move on to the Negev city of Ofakim for the night.

Yediot and Israel Radio reported that the joint Israeli-Palestinian military coordination commission, which convened at the Erez Crossing on Monday, decided that the IDF will start transferring in an orderly fashion evacuated settlements to the PA even before all Gaza Strip settlements are evacuated.

Leading media reported that Israel and Egypt have reached an in-principle agreement, according to which 750 Egyptian border policemen will be stationed along the Philadelphi route. Ha'aretz says that Egypt has explicitly pledged to prevent smuggling from its side and that the Egyptian force, whose equipment will only include light weapons and APCs, will not be able to bring tanks or anti-tank missiles into the Sinai. Ha'aretz reported that the bilateral security-military commission will meet next week to finalize the details of the agreement. The media quoted Yuval Steinitz, the chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, as saying that this "pitiful" agreement harms the great achievement of the Sinai's demilitarization.

Jerusalem Post reported that the PA plans to launch a mass public awareness campaign within a few days to promote Israel's evacuation of the Gaza Strip settlements later this month.

Ha'aretz cited the growing belief of the Israeli defense establishment that the stability of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime will be at risk during the coming year. The newspaper quoted a senior Israeli defense official as saying that Assad's mistakes -- the infiltration of terrorists from Syria into Iraq despite U.S. warnings; the continuation of Syrian intelligence activity in Lebanon, despite Syria's assurances; the continuation of the activity of the headquarters of Palestinian terrorist groups in Damascus; and Syria's ongoing assistance to Hizbullah -- could cost him his rule.

All media reported that Crown Prince Abdullah became King of Saudi Arabia on Monday, succeeding his late brother Fahd. Jerusalem Post cited academic and diplomatic assessments in Jerusalem, according to which the developments in Saudi Arabia are unlikely to have any immediate impact on that country's relations with Israel.

Ha'aretz's web site reported that Iran's president elect, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said this week he will continue to support Hizbullah's struggle against the "enemies of Islam." He reportedly made the comment after meeting with Hizbullah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah in Tehran on Monday.

Israel Radio reported that Kfir Levy, a Jewish driver from Ramat Gan, and two Israeli Arabs have been arraigned under suspicion of having abetted the Netanya

suicide bomber on July 12. Yediot quoted Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin as saying on Monday that the terrorist cell that planned to assassinate Shas mentor Rabbi Ovadia Yosef was captured last week. Ha'aretz cited statistics released Monday by the Shin Bet: 21 Israelis were killed and 238 others were wounded during the period of quiet declared by the PA and the terrorist organizations.

Jerusalem Post reported that Fatah leaders and activists have decided to establish a Palestinian "popular army" to help the PA enforce law and order in the Gaza Strip after Israel evacuates the area. The newspaper quoted sources in the Gaza Strip as saying that the decision to establish that body was taken by Tunis-based hard-line PLO official Farouk Kaddoumi. Jerusalem Post quoted PA officials in Ramallah who expressed concern over the decision, saying there was no need for "another militia" and that the Palestinian security forces are capable of taking control over the areas that will be evacuated by Israel.

All media reported that on Monday, "by-passing" the U.S. Senate, President Bush appointed John Bolton U.S. representative to the UN. The media remind that Bolton is controversial and that the U.S. Jewish leaders appreciate him, especially thanks to his role in revoking the 1975 UN General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism.

1. Gaza Disengagement:

Summary:

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Sharon is beginning with disengaging from Gaza.... After it, in my opinion, will come the real thing: larger withdrawals and evacuations from Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank]."

Leading industrialist Stef Wertheimer wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "I am in favor of Sharon now, because Sharon is now doing the possible and right move."

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "There will be no big response [to the disengagement] in the region and the withdrawal will have little effect on Arab states' policies."

Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized: " The Prime Minister can 'flex his muscles' when facing the 'orange' settlers, but he knows well that he must submit to every American dictate."

Commentator Marina Rozenblit wrote in conservative Russian-language daily Vesty: "An undercover dialog conducted between Prime Minister Sharon's closest supporters and religious leaders of the opposition [to disengagement] is additional evidence that ... [the latter] are actually almost reconciled with the inevitability of [disengagement]."

Block Quotes:

1I. "After the 8,000 Will Come the 80,000"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 2): "During his visit to France, Sharon said: 'Had a million Jews settled in the territories, Israel could have pursued a different policy.' By so saying Sharon admitted ... that the settlement movement stands facing its failure. True, some 250,000 Jews live beyond the Green Line, but 150,000 of them live in what is referred to as the "major settlement blocs," blocs of Jewish population that either abut or nearly abut the 1967 borders. That is where Israel ends.... When faced with the failure of the settlement enterprise, what is left for Sharon -- its prophet and commander -- to do? Precisely what he is doing now: to minimize the damage, to pick up the pieces, to withdraw and to stabilize new borders. He is beginning with disengaging from Gaza, but Gaza is just the first installment, a mere brigade exercise, and a dress rehearsal. After it, in my opinion, will come the real thing: larger withdrawals and evacuations from Judea and Samaria. Just as Sharon did not stop after 40 kilometers in the Lebanon War, so too will he not stop in the evacuation of settlements after Gush

Katif and Netzarim. Sharon will go for the 'big plan,' and will seek to transfer at least 80,000 settlers who live on the far side of the separation fence route to the Israeli side.... A man like Sharon, a statesman who thinks only on a huge scale, would never make do with less than that."

II. "For Sharon Now"

Leading industrialist Stef Wertheimer wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (August 2): "I am in favor of Sharon now, because Sharon is now doing the possible and right move... It is no longer possible to determine the destiny of another nation, because maintaining 7,000 Israelis in this Palestinian space is illogical.... When Israel arrived in Gush Katif 40 years ago, we were a different Israel.... We increased the defense budget at the expense of occupational education and professionalism, and of the development of the Galilee and Negev. This indeed was a defense necessity, but it almost swallowed us.... Modern industry and exports still are Israel's -- and the individual Israeli's -- best chance.... No longer exploiters and exploited -- a new tomorrow."

III. "The Debate That Won't Happen"

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (August 2): "What about the [notion] that the withdrawal proves Israel is weak and that it shows terrorism is working? Certainly, there will be those in Hamas and Hizbullah that will make such claims but they will not be repeated too often by others. Why? Most basically because the Arab states and Iran do not need or want the image of a weak Israel. To be useful, Israel must be seen as strong, as an imminent threat. Only if this is so can the 'Zionist menace' justify continued dictatorship, high military spending, and a denial of internal freedom. Unless Israel is a threat, the battle could be left to the Palestinians and there is no ability to use the issue as a professed grievance against the West.... If Israel is so weak, radical groups can argue it is time for the Arab states to go to war and devote all their resources to defeating it. But if, for example, Syria made that mistake it would be a disaster that might well prove fatal to the regime there. Therefore, there will be no big response in the region and the withdrawal will have little effect on Arab states' policies. The limited exception is Egypt, which will now have to manage its border with the Gaza Strip."

IV. "Behind the Smiles"

Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized (August 2): "During her meetings with Sharon, Mofaz, and Shalom, Secretary of State Rice demonstrated an aggressive and

SIPDIS patronizing attitude, as someone who is very aware of Israel's full dependence on the United States. The Prime Minister can 'flex his muscles' when facing the 'orange' settlers, but he knows well that he must submit to every American dictate, whether he likes it or not. In the final analysis, who eventually dictates Israeli policy? These aren't Israel's senior defense officials or economists, but the top U.S. officials, who act out of domestic motives and considerations, which often utterly contradict Israel's needs."

V. "Shooting a Movie "

Commentator Marina Rozenblit wrote in conservative, Russian-language daily Vesty (August 2): "The opponents of the settlers' evacuation from the northern West Bank and Gaza have regarded the unilateral disengagement plan as a propaganda trick and a performance ... to achieve some political goals.... However, as the implementation date of the disengagement plan is getting closer, the argument that 'it will not happen because it can never happen' ... becomes irrelevant.... An undercover dialog conducted between Prime Minister Sharon's closest supporters and religious leaders of the opposition [to disengagement] is additional evidence that although the latter are continuing the struggle ... to express their protests, they are actually almost reconciled with the inevitability of [disengagement]."

12. Saudi Arabia:

Summary:

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Thus far, [King] Abdullah has done relatively well in maneuvering around these pressures, but with the line to the throne becoming ever shorter, he may find himself facing a few more rebels from within his own house."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "King Fahd's death may not mark the immediate end of an era, but it is a reminder that that end is coming."

Block Quotes:

I. "A Sense of Saudi Stability"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (August 2): "The sense the kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] has managed to convey over the past decade, on the surface at least, has been one of political stability.... But this stability has to be reexamined against the backdrop of the developments that have taken place in Saudi Arabia over the past decade, and the past two years in particular. The stability rests on two foundations -- recognition of the heir system among the seven brothers, and the understanding that the ruling family is bound to see to the welfare of the kingdom's citizens. But these two foundations themselves rest on an aging family ... whose members harbor a fair amount of mistrust for one another... Tension also exists between Interior Minister Prince Naif, who is also waiting in line for the throne, and Abdullah on questions pertaining primarily to reforms in the country.... The pressures from home with regard to the problem of poverty have joined the religious pressure on the part of the Shi'ite minority, as well as anti-reform pressure from radical circles. Thus far, [King] Abdullah has done relatively well in maneuvering around these pressures, but with the line to the throne becoming ever shorter, he may find himself facing a few more rebels from within his own house. When it comes to foreign policy, it is clear to the Saudi royal family that there is no cause for change."

II. "The Crumbling House of Saud"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (August 2): "King Fahd, who died yesterday, was the Saudi leader who invited American troops into his kingdom to repel Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, but he was also the world leader most responsible for creating the monstrous world of militant Islamism.... In June at Cairo University, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke not just of the need for truly free elections in Egypt, but of the 'brave citizens demanding accountable government' in Saudi Arabia.... This sort of frank talk is revolutionary in the U.S.-Saudi relationship. Yet it is barely a taste of what could be done. The Saudi human rights record, despite the image of having created a 'modern state,' is not dissimilar to that of the Taliban. The funding by Saudi 'charities' of a global network of radical Islamist indoctrination continues. So does institutionalized anti-Semitism which, if it happened in place like Austria, would long ago have triggered an international boycott.... There is, in short, much to be done. Though the U.S. has become blunter and bolder, it is still an open question whether America considers the House of Saud as the 'devil it knows' and therefore preferable to most foreseeable alternatives. Ultimately, however, the experience from the demise of the oddly similar Soviet ideological gerontocracy indicates that collapse will come, even if the West foolishly tries to resist it. King Fahd's death may not mark the immediate end of an era, but it is a reminder that that end is coming."

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